DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT
OF THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF INDIA

This document has been prepared during consultations at the Bahá'í World Centre in September 2008 about the functioning of the Department of the Secretariat of the National Spiritual Assembly of India.

1. Role of a National Spiritual Assembly

The work of the National Secretary and the Department of the Secretariat will need to be reviewed with the perspective of the role and functions of a National Spiritual Assembly, particularly in the context of the current global Plans. In the 153 Riḍván message, the Universal House of Justice stated:

> As for the institutions, entry by troops will act upon them as much as they will act upon it. The evolution of local and national Bahá'í Assemblies at this time calls for a new state of mind on the part of their members as well as on the part of those who elect them, for the Bahá'í community is engaged in an immense historical process that is entering a critical stage. Bahá'u'lláh has given to the world institutions to operate in an Order designed to canalize the forces of a new civilization. Progress towards that glorious realization requires a great and continuous expansion of the Bahá'í community, so that adequate scope is provided for the maturation of these institutions. This is a matter of immediate importance to Bahá'u'lláh's avowed supporters in all lands.
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> For such an expansion to be stimulated and accommodated, the Spiritual Assemblies must rise to a new stage in the exercise of their responsibilities as channels of divine guidance, planners of the teaching work, developers of human resources, builders of communities, and loving shepherds of the multitudes. They can realize these prospects through increasing the ability of their members to take counsel together in accordance with the principles of the Faith and to consult with the friends under their jurisdiction, through fostering the spirit of service, through spontaneously collaborating with the Continental Counsellors and their auxiliaries, and through cultivating their external relations.

Given the exciting and far-reaching developments occurring in India in advancing the process of entry by troops in cluster after cluster, the National Assembly has the duty to further develop the capacity of the Regional and State Bahá'í Councils, as well as the Local Spiritual Assemblies, in discharging their responsibilities in encouraging and empowering the believers to increasingly focus their energies on promoting the Divine Plan. The National Assembly thus needs effective channels for the flow of guidance, decisions, encouragement, human resources, literature, information, etc. to the institutions, believers, and the community.

To this end, the National Assembly has to have in place an appropriate structure of departments and offices. The role and function of the Department of the Secretariat is then to provide executive assistance to the National Assembly and its Secretary in carrying out the numerous decisions and tasks of this divinely ordained national institution.

2. The role of the National Secretary

The standard constitution of a National Spiritual Assembly states: "The officers of the National Spiritual Assembly shall consist of a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, and such other officers as may be found necessary for the proper conduct of its affairs." The role assumed by the National Secretary is pivotal for the proper functioning of the National Assembly and involves a variety of crucial functions. The National Secretary keeps the members of the Spiritual Assembly informed of important developments. He or she acts as the "chief executive officer" of the National Assembly, liaising between the community and the Assembly by maintaining a steady flow of communication, and offering guidance and encouragement. He or she also directs the work of a sizeable Department of the Secretariat.

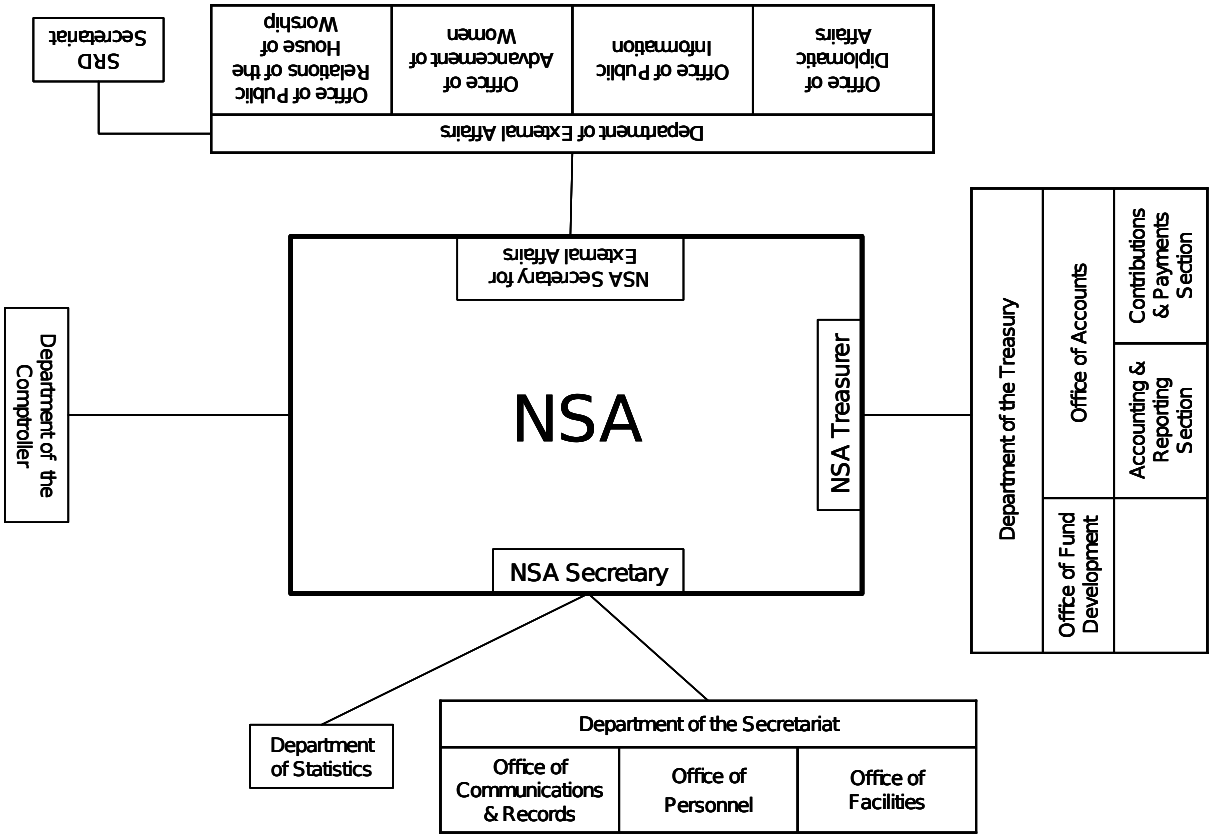
While the National Secretary also functions as the official representative of the National Assembly and the Faith to the non-Bahá'í world, in India, due to growing needs and endeavours in the external affairs field, the National Assembly has established a Department of External Affairs to discharge most of this particular responsibility.

Since there is no uniform set of guidelines or standards which a National Assembly is enjoined to follow in organizing the work of its Secretary and National Office, it is for the Assembly to determine the nature and scope of authority to be exercised on its behalf by its Secretary and other officers. However, two undesirable conditions must be avoided. One arises when the expanding work of the Cause leads to the National Assembly's agenda being occupied by a multitude of items, resulting in decisions being made in haste without sufficient consideration of the various aspects. The other occurs when a National Secretary gradually assumes a decision-making role which belongs properly to the National Assembly and thus becomes a barrier impeding the believers and Local Spiritual Assemblies from having legitimate access to the National Assembly. The routine actions of the Secretary of the National Assembly should be based on clearly stated National Assembly policies, precedents and directives and should be readily accessible for use as the need arises.

Given the size and complexity of the Indian Bahá'í community, many of the day-to-day responsibilities of the National Secretary necessarily are carried out by a Department of the Secretariat. With the Department of the Secretariat handling the bulk of routine matters, the National Secretary would then be free to devote attention to macro-level matters.

3. Department of the Secretariat

The diagram below describes the current structure of the National Office of the National Assembly of India, not including national committees and taskforces:



The Department of the Secretariat consists of three Offices: Office of Communication and Records (with a separate section for confidential correspondence), Office of Personnel, and the Office of Facilities. The Head of the Department of Secretariat reports to the National Assembly though the National Secretary. The Coordinators of the three Offices report to the Head of Department. The staff within each Office report to the Coordinator of that particular Office. It should be noted that although the functions of the three offices fall within the Department of the Secretariat, the scope of their work and responsibilities extend in some areas to the operations of the whole Bahá'í House. Personnel matters for any Department, for instance, are all facilitated by the Office of Personnel, while issues related to office space for all staff are handled by the Office of Facilities.

In this connection, a few words about the various Departments and Offices operating from the national office are in order. Although each entity conducts a particular function or responsibility on behalf of the National Spiritual Assembly, they all serve the needs of that same single institution. Indeed, any form of fragmentation that may be wrongly created by the division of responsibilities into departments and offices should be dispelled immediately. Instead, learning must be at the root of the administration at

the national office. It follows that all staff should operate as a team, each within their own distinct spheres but conscious of their overall interconnectedness and their single objective of serving the National Assembly. Instead of creating “walls”, it may be more fitting to refer to “curtains” that separate the various offices and departments from one another. It follows that staff should consult openly and frequently among each other and draw upon each other’s learning where possible. This principle should permeate all levels of operation, including the logistical operations of office space where individuals and offices are physically located. Instead of reacting with intolerance to mistakes made, a system for feedback and consultation will allow for a necessary degree of self-correction and learning. Rather than reprimands and criticism, the staff members should strive for a culture of encouragement which in turn fosters growth and learning.

Since the Department of the Secretariat serves to promote executive assistance to the National Secretary, it is with this understanding that the Secretary is overseeing and directing the work of that Department. However, for various reasons, there will remain of course a number of matters which the Secretary may prefer to handle him or herself, such as the recording of National Assembly meetings, the preparation of the Assembly’s agenda, and the drafting of important communications to the community, believers, institutions, Heads of State, and the House of Justice.

The pages below will describe in more detail the functions and responsibilities of each office of the Department of the Secretariat. However, so important is the question of fostering ever greater unity, harmony, and collaboration in the everyday life and work of the staff at the national centre that the next section will first be devoted to the role of the coordinators in overcoming fragmentation and encouraging teamwork.

4. Role of Coordinators

4.1 Fostering a spirit of collaboration and teamwork

> *"Verily, God loveth those who are working in His path in groups, for they are a solid foundation." "Verily God loveth those who, as though they were a solid wall, do battle for His Cause in serried lines!"*
> (Abdu'l-Baha, Bahá'í World Faith - Abdu'l-Baha Section, p. 401 and Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 260 respectively)

> *"The first quality for leadership…is the capacity to use the energy and competence that exists in the rank and file of its followers."*
> (30 August 1930, written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a National Spiritual Assembly)

The success of the work of the Department, and in fact the whole national office, depends to a large extent on the staff working together as one group or team. The role played by coordinators and Heads of Departments is crucial in this respect. They will need to consult freely and frequently among each other, both in formal scheduled meetings and in informal settings, share staff with others when needed, and periodically reflect together. Undoubtedly, the team spirit which characterizes the interactions among the coordinators will set an example to the rest of the staff.

While fostering a team spirit, coordinators are to channel the talents and energies of the staff in carrying out the work of the office or department. His or her duties are not exercised through dictatorial authority, but it is through humble fellowship and a spirit of frank and loving consultation that the power of action can be unlocked.

4.2 General Terms of Reference for Coordinators in the Department of the Secretariat

Purpose: A coordinator is responsible to the Head of Department for ensuring that the office efficiently executes the duties and accomplishes the goals assigned to it; strives to build the capacity of those who work within it; and seeks to ensure collaboration between offices for the effective functioning of the Secretariat as a whole.

Functions:

- Ensures the proper documentation of office policies and procedures
- Assigns responsibility and work to the other members of the staff of the office, supervises, encourages, and periodically reviews their performance
- Familiarizes new staff members with the office's requirements and their role in carrying them out, and ensures on-the-job training
- Convenes regular staff meetings for consultations – which would include conveying and receiving information, obtaining suggestions and addressing queries concerning the work, with the aim of building up and maintaining intelligent and whole-hearted collaboration

- Ensures for an adequately trained and informed substitute during his or her absence and sees that staff are trained such that they are also able to cover other duties for other staff within the office when needed
- Proposes the annual goals and the financial and personnel budgets of the office to the Head of Department for submission to the Comptroller’s Office
- Coordinates and approves the planned absences of staff members, keeps the Head of Department informed
- With the assistance of the staff of the Office, prepares relevant reports for submission to the Head of Department as and when required
- Is responsible for ensuring that the office’s terms of reference, organizational structure and staffing accurately reflect and serve the purposes of the National Assembly, submitting any proposed changes in these to the Office of Personnel
- Authorizes work orders, print orders, requisitions for office machinery or major supplies
- Is alert to opportunities for need-based training for staff where necessary
- Is concerned for the welfare of the staff, and foster an environment of teambuilding which supports spiritual and intellectual development.

5. Office of Communications and Records

5.1 Institutional memory

To effectively engage in correspondence and provide guidance and make decisions, a National Assembly and its agencies should be able, when needed, to retrieve and refer to past decisions and guidance. Retrieval cannot be dependent on the individual memory of members or staff. There is clearly a need to maintain institutional memory that transcends change of membership and staff. The institutional memory has to be stored coherently so as to avoid the danger of having fragmented memory. In order to maintain institutional memory it is necessary to have in place certain systems, including a mail management system and a document archival and retrieval system with a central depository.

5.2 Terms of Reference of the Office of Communications & Records

Purpose: The Office of Communications and Records assists the Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly in efficiently and reliably handling correspondence, accurately maintaining the records of the institution, and organizing information for easy access. The Office deploys its energies, skills and experience and plays an active role in supporting the Assembly's safeguarding of the best interests of the Faith in India.

Functions:

- Process incoming communications received by the National Assembly.
- Retrieve and assemble information required by the Secretary or the National Assembly to consider any questions, issues or areas of activity.
- Draft responses in accordance with policies and standards set by the National Assembly and, as a mouthpiece of the institution, ensure that these uphold the appropriate tone and language.
- Process drafted communications, checking language, formatting, grammar, and factual information.
- Dispatch communications to their intended recipients, maintain current and accurate contact information for institutions, agencies and individuals with which the National Assembly corresponds.
- Ensure that communications receive timely responses and assist the Secretary in making sure decisions of the National Assembly are carried out efficiently.
- Provide or arrange for the translation of documents as required.
- Assist the Secretary in the preparation of the agenda minutes of National Assembly meetings.
- Disseminate information to the community, such as the newsletter.
- Safeguard confidentiality in all its interactions.
- Maintain pending log of outstanding actions.
- Monitors outstanding decisions of the National Assembly and prompts the Secretary for items to be placed on the agenda.
- Provides for the constant upgrading of staff skills and conducts training, whenever necessary.

- Oversees the operation of the mail management system.
- Manages the document archival and retrieval system with a central depository.

5.3 Mail management system

A proper mail management system will allow the Department of the Secretariat to facilitate the processing of incoming and outgoing mail. The system will need to track the life of the document, consisting of a number of distinct steps:

a. Analyze incoming mail: All incoming mail, whether addressed to National Assembly or its departments, is given to the Head of Department (HOD) of the Secretariat or another trusted individual. The HOD will open the mail, arrange for indexing (logging in key data of the correspondence, such as date, short abstract, etc). Assignment of a unique identification number is essential for easy retrieval. Decision is made by HOD to identify the recipients of each letter (such as departments, agencies, etc) according to evolving guidelines approved by the National Assembly. Each recipient is clearly identified as either an "action" recipient or an "information" recipient. Information copies need not be in hard copy, but could be electronically forwarded, if desired. In either case all receiving copies should know who else has received a copy (both info and action copies). A slip or stamp is attached showing the distribution of the document and other remarks if necessary. The original document is kept in the master-file, while copies are being distributed to each recipient. A copy of the daily log of incoming mail is shared with the National Secretary.

b. Translation of incoming mail, if necessary: Incoming mail that requires translation will be sent to either a staff member at the national office or to a resource person. Major letters from the House of Justice to be shared with the entire community and require translation are sent to the translators approved by the National Assembly. Documents will need to be entered into a translation log book to keep track of the outstanding documents. Upon receipt of the translated document, the HOD will proceed with analyzing the document as described in step 1.

c. Document analysis: Of those communications that need to be handled by the National Secretary or the Department of Secretariat, the Head of Department will segregate the communications into:
    1. those that require routine or fairly predictable responses [such as acknowledging receipt of minutes, wishing the best wishes of the National Assembly for a certain event];
    2. those that require responses that can be made based on clearly applicable guidelines and policies already set out by the

National Assembly [such as the National Assembly's position on Bahá'ís running for office in university student unions]; and

3. those that require responses after being deliberated upon by the National Assembly including those of a confidential or sensitive nature.

d. Research and drafting: It is envisaged that mail belonging to category (C-1) will be channelled to the Coordinator of the Office of Communications & Records who will prepare a draft response to be approved by the National Secretary, bearing in mind grammar and style guidelines. When the draft is approved (at times with amendments), the Coordinator then harnesses his Office to generate the response communication. A copy of any significant incoming correspondence (in particular minutes of meetings) would of course have to be placed in the master file for the next National Assembly meeting.

It is envisaged that mails belonging to category (C-2) above will be subjected to a second level mail analysis by the Head of Department or the Coordinator of the Office of Communications & Records. Such an analysis would include generating a memorandum identifying the sender, summarizing the issues raised in the letter or the information being conveyed, identifying the relevant or applicable policy of the National Assembly and a draft response to be approved by the National Secretary, bearing in mind grammar and style guidelines. When the draft is approved (at times with amendments), the Head of Department or the Coordinator harnesses the Office of Communications and Records to generate the response communication. A copy of the incoming and outgoing correspondence would of course have to be placed in the master file for the next National Assembly meeting.

It is envisaged that mail belonging to category (C-3) above will be subjected to a second level mail analysis by the Head of Department or the Coordinator of the Office of Communications & Records. Such an analysis would include generating a memorandum identifying the sender, summarizing the issues raised in the letter or the information being conveyed, identifying relevant guidance in the Writings, identifying past guidance from the House of Justice, identifying past decisions of the National Assembly that may have some bearing on the issue at hand and a request to the National Secretary to place the matter before the National Assembly. The National Secretary then considers the memorandum and places the matter on the National Assembly meeting agenda. The memorandum will be circulated to all National Assembly members in advance of the National Assembly meeting. There will be occasions when the National Secretary may require the Department to put up more detailed appendices to the memorandum so as to add value to the forthcoming National Assembly consultations on the matter. The National Assembly then

makes a decision on the matter. After the meeting the National Secretary prepares the reply communication or guides the Head of Department to prepare a draft of the response for the consideration of the National Secretary, bearing in mind grammar and style guidelines. There may be times when due to the significance or complexity of the letter, it may be prudent for the National Secretary to circulate the draft amongst the other NSA members. If that occurs, the suggestions from the other members should be sent only to the National Secretary. The Head of Department should have no intimation of views of individual members of the National Assembly. A copy of the outgoing correspondence would of course have to be placed in the master file for the next National Assembly meeting. Such a letter may also need to be placed in the Department Policy File if appropriate.

The above procedures may, of course, evolve with learning in action. It is also obvious that the Secretary can carry out directly any of the above actions his or herself depending on the significance and/or sensitivity of the issue.

e. Quality control of the document: Staff of OCR (though not the drafter) will be responsible for proofreading and editing each draft letter for typographical errors, grammar, style consistency, checking facts, and the like, before it is signed. When available, reference should be made to departmental style guides, and dictionaries.

f. Translation of outgoing documents, if necessary: Outgoing mail that requires translation (e.g. policy documents) will be sent for translation to either a staff member at the national office or to a resource person.

g. Dispatching mail appropriately: Once a draft has been approved and received the signature of the National Secretary, selected OCR staff members will dispatch the message through appropriate means (email, fax, confirmation copy) to the intended recipient(s).

h. Filing of documents: OCR staff will carry out the responsibilities regarding the filing of documents, such as assigning all outgoing mail a unique identification number; properly index relevant information; matching the correspondence with incoming mail, when applicable; making internal notes, if necessary (e.g. NSA decision #), tagging letters by topic for easy retrieval in future; making a notation of any outgoing letters that contain statement of policy; and filing the document in its proper location.

5.4 Confidential correspondence

Part of the correspondence of the National Assembly will be sensitive or classified in nature, such as matters related to personal status of individuals or other confidential issues. It is envisaged that for the time being, the handling of such correspondence (document analysis, research and drafting,

dispatch, and filing) will be carried out only by the coordinator of the Office of Correspondence and Records. At some time in future, a separate section within the Office of Communication and Records will need to be established.

5.5 System of archiving and retrieval

Once properly indexed, filed documents can be easily retrieved using the relevant software. The National Secretary and staff of OCR will need to have access to this retrieval system. Hard-copy files will then only be accessed when required by the National Secretary or National Assembly. Classified soft-copy documents will need limited access. Classified hard-copy documents will need to be kept in a safe and secure location and accessible only to a minimum number of trusted individuals.

Current hard copy files may need to be reviewed and combed if necessary. The remaining hard copy documents can be digitalized as well over time. A special project team can be assigned to this task.

Since every document is digitally archived using appropriate software, the National Assembly will need to set up archival guidelines for the hard-copy files. Such guidelines will need to stipulate which categories of documents (e.g. title deeds, minutes, reports, etc) are to be kept and for how long they should be archived. All hard-copy documents that are not archived will be shredded.

OCR will also need to maintain policy files of the National Assembly. The content of the policy files, (consisting of letters, documents, and extracts of minutes) will be decided upon by the National Assembly.

5.6 Agenda and minutes of meetings of the National Assembly

It is axiomatic that National Assembly consultations must take place in an environment where the members are aware of any guidance touching upon the matter at hand. Thus while the agenda of a National Assembly meeting is a matter to be settled by the National Secretary, the Department of Secretariat has a useful role to play by researching for the National Assembly relevant past guidance and decisions and placing them in an aide memoir for National Assembly members.

Thus it would be ideal for the National Secretary to settle the agenda (done in consultation with the Chairperson and with the input of the other Assembly members) at least a week ahead of the date of the meeting. The agenda will then be shared with the Head of Department who will organise the archival retrieval work to be done for the National Assembly.

The minutes of the National Assembly should clearly state whether a decision is a policy decision, following which OCR will extract those portions of the minutes and update the policy files. A separate taskforce consisting of members of the National Assembly could be formed to identify and

compile previous policy decisions of the National Assembly, using relevant and logical policy headings.

The OCR coordinator is to review outstanding agenda items / decisions or matters arising and to bring these back to the National Assembly for its attention.

5.7 Software and hardware requirements

To explore the possibilities of obtaining a suitable Document Management System (DMS) software and the required hardware, such as a reliable server system and storage devices, photocopier machine with scan capacity, shredders, filing cabinets, and other necessary equipment. The DMS software will need to accommodate confidentiality matters. Ideally, it may also include a document tracking system, if necessary. Ongoing training of staff in the usage of the software is crucial.

5.8 Human resources needed

In determining the human resources that are required to support the work of the OCR, it would be helpful to make a distinction between operational staff on the one hand and project-based staff on the other. In addition, it is recommended to start with the absolute minimum number of people required and to gradually increase in size as experience dictates and the workload increases. In this light, it is envisioned that the OCR can start with five staff members and expand over time to seven, as shown below, if found necessary.

Position	Long-term	Short-Term	Total
Coordinator	1		1
Support staff	2		2
Records	1		1
Dispatch	2	1	3
Total	6	1	7

According to the table above, it is expected that the coordinator will also assume the responsibilities of the confidential section of the Office (handling of confidential correspondence (including receiving, processing, drafting, dispatching, and filing of documents), as well as assisting with the agenda and minutes of the National Assembly. Two people (long-term) may be needed for the various functions of the office, including research and analysis, drafting, quality control, translation, as well as records management. As the work increases, a separate person may need to be recruited for records management. It is envisioned that eventually three people are needed as general assistants or “dispatchers”, responsible for local errands and delivers, bulk photo–copying, and other necessary tasks.

It seems also worthwhile to identify an IT resource person who could assist the Office on a short-term basis in the setup of DMS software. Other IT consultants within India may also be required. In addition, two short-term project-based staff may be needed to digitalize the old records of the National Assembly.

6. Office of Personnel

> *"We must never dwell too much on the attitudes and feelings of our fellow-believers towards us. What is most important is to foster love and harmony and ignore any rebuffs we may receive; in this way the weaknesses of human nature and the peculiarity or attitude of any particular person is not magnified, but pales into insignificance in comparison with our joint service to the Faith we all love."*
> (From a letter dated 19 September 1948 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

6.1 General Staff Policies

All those who serve at the National Office, whether they receive remuneration for their services or not, are considered staff. Some are short-term whilst others are long-term staff. Such an attitude will ensure a common framework and work ethos, ensuring uniformity of the application of policies that have been set by the National Assembly. There are different terms for short-term staff positions: 3 months, 6 months, 12 months, and 24 months, while long-term staff positions are ideally filled for longer periods, say at least 4 years. In addition, it is expected that from time to time there will be individuals who could serve on an ad hoc basis to assist with certain well-defined projects with fixed time lines.

Over time, it is envisaged that the National Office will be staffed entirely by trusted individuals, and that the number of long-term staff will be reduced and replaced by short-term staff, whenever possible. To this end, it will be necessary to identify immediately, in collaboration with the Heads of the relevant Departments, those positions that are sensitive and have confidentiality considerations (especially within Departments, such as Treasury, and Statistics, and the Office of Communications and Records) and ensure that these positions are staffed with Bahá'ís who are aware of the need for discretion. It will also be necessary to identify which positions require a long-term staff member and which ones can be carried out by a short-term staff member. Gradually, the current "permanent" staff will be reduced, either through a natural retirement process or having found better opportunities elsewhere. When necessary, settlement packages within a defined framework can be offered which the National Assembly will need to make provision for in its budget. This, understandably, will all need to be carried out in a phased but definite manner.

It is imperative that the National Assembly establish clear and transparent personnel policies, equally applicable to every member serving at the National Office. These policies would be made available to all staff members. Clearly, it would not be possible to set policies on every single matter. For certain issues, the National Assembly would set out principles, and staff members would be encouraged to act in accordance with these principles, thereby calling for a heightened level of maturity on their part.

The Office of Personnel does not decide upon rules and policies but functions on behalf of the National Spiritual Assembly to work with the staff members and apply the established policies. Inconsistencies in personnel matters related to National Assembly members should be brought to the attention of the National Secretary by the Office of Personnel. The National Assembly would then itself address the matter.

6.2 Recruitment

The Office of Personnel will facilitate the flow of recruitment from beginning to end. Vacancies and the corresponding qualifications of candidates are identified in collaboration with the Heads of Departments, after which the Office of Personnel will search and identify, again in collaboration with the relevant Department, suitable candidates for the position. A database will need to be maintained of individuals who have offered to serve at the national centre and assistance can be sought from a network of individuals throughout India for a variety of services. Confidential references will need to be obtained from trusted individuals before a possible interview is setup. The interview(s) are carried out by the coordinator of the Office of Personnel together with the relevant Head of Departments. Once a suitable candidate is found, the Office of Personnel, with the input of the relevant Head of Department, prepares a short report for the National Assembly for its consideration and final approval. The Office of Personnel then invites the individual for service at the national centre and makes the necessary arrangements for his or her smooth relocation and orientation.

6.3 Orientation

Each new staff member (whether long-term or short-term) will participate in a structured orientation programme offered by the Office of Personnel at the commencement of their service. This programme will orientate the staff member in the workings of all Departments and Offices operating from the National Office, thereby reinforcing the inter-connection of the work and avoiding fragmentation. The programme will then continue with a specific orientation that will be given by the respective Departments. The orientation programme will emphasize the spiritual aspects of service, as well as the practical matters of living in Delhi and serving at the Bahá'í House. New staff will be given an opportunity to be introduced to the National Spiritual Assembly and arrangements will be made by the Office of Personnel to accompany them on their first visit to pray at the House of Worship.

6.4 Spiritual and Intellectual Training Programme

Every individual serving at the National Centre is a precious human resource for the National Spiritual Assembly and the Delhi Bahá'í community. Great emphasis needs to be placed on the spiritual aspects of their service while

at the National Office. A programme for spiritual and intellectual development of staff members will mean that those coming to serve at the National Centre will leave at the end of their service with an increased capacity and knowledge that will be diffused to their home communities throughout India.

For this to happen, the Office of Personnel will offer an ongoing programme which will be open to all staff and will include the study of the sequence of the institute courses. The friends will also be encouraged to initiate core activities and participate in the cycles of activity within the Delhi cluster. This comprehensive spiritual training programme will involve a planned curriculum which could include talks and deepening sessions, the study of a number of subjects, including the World Order letters of Shoghi Effendi, and selected messages of the Supreme Body. The staff could meet on a weekly basis, outside of office hours. The Coordinator of the Office of Personnel or another designated individual will guide and accompany the staff through all aspects of this programme, arranging for trainers or facilitators as necessary. It is envisaged that the programme could eventually also be offered to those staff and guides serving at the Bahá'í House of Worship.

6.5 Terms of Reference for the Office of Personnel

Purpose: To provide suitable candidates to fill authorized positions in each Department or Office; to ensure adequate orientation of new staff with regard to service at the National Office; to be concerned generally for staff welfare; and to organize spiritual and intellectual training programmes for staff.

Functions:

- Establishes and maintains a database of persons from various parts of India with specific skills who may be able to serve at the National Bahá'í Centre, and also seeking references for those who volunteer for service.
- Conducts all correspondence involved in the recruitment of personnel.
- Submits names of candidates, in consultation with the Head of the relevant Department, to the National Assembly for approval.
- Provides orientation and briefing of new arrivals on personnel policies and conditions of service at the National Bahá'í Centre.
- Implements personnel policies approved by the National Assembly, covering working hours and conditions, vacations, leaves of absence, etc.
- Maintains personnel records, except for such items as must remain confidential with the National Assembly.
- Monitors vacation schedules and records of leave taken.
- Is concerned with staff welfare generally.
- Wherever possible, proposes a slate of candidates for filling in for staff absences.
- Provides assistance related to visa applications/ticketing for pilgrims and other visitors

- Arranges for travel and/or ticketing for National Assembly members and staff members when needed.
- Assists the Heads of Department in conducting such staff evaluations as are required by the National Assembly.
- Arranges for spiritual and intellectual training for staff
- Assists with a regular review of staff positions

It is envisaged that for the time being one long-term staff member is required to serve as the coordinator of the Office of Personnel. Over time, he or she can call upon the services of a short-term staff member when needed.

7. Office of Facilities

7.1 Institution of National Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds

In thinking about the role of the Office of Facilities, it is important to reflect upon the significance of the National Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds as an important institution within the Faith. In a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Assembly of India dated 20 march 2002, it is stated:

> The operation of your National Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds has the means by which to shine as an example of Bahá'í principles in the workplace… To empower and encourage the staff… to consider work as workship, to care for their surroundings, to uphold the dignity of the Seat of the National Spiritual Assembly through cleanliness and orderliness will in no doubt draw further confirmations and bounties upon your endeavours.

Also essential is the principle of attraction to beauty and proper regard both for the aesthetics of the physical structure and surroundings, as well as the beauty exemplified through the speech and behaviour of those within it.

In order to provide a hospitable and courteous atmosphere at the National Centre, it seems appropriate to establish and maintain a proper reception area where visitors to the National Centre can be welcomed and received. This reception area could have various facilities such as comfortable seating arrangements and displays.

It is also envisaged that a regular flow of short-term staff will be required at the National Bahá'í Centre to assist with the work in several departments. This development calls for putting in place adequate facilities for hosting such people at the Centre. Their facilities, though modest and simple, would have to ensure comfortable living and dining space. As the flow of short-term staff members increases over a period of time, the guest rooms that now serve as a hospice may need to be used to properly accommodate such staff members.

To ensure the proper upkeep, maintenance and security of grounds, gardens, and buildings, the current system will need to be further refined and developed. This would imply the setting of standards of cleaning and maintenance, training staff in the necessary skills and providing them adequate equipment to carry out their tasks, and evaluating the work according to clear and transparent criteria.

7.2 Terms of Reference for the Office of Facilities

Purpose: The Office of Facilities assists the Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly in upholding the dignity and beauty of the buildings and grounds at the National Centre and to ensure their efficient functioning, while fostering a

warm, courteous, and hospitable atmosphere for those serving in the buildings.

Functions:

- To maintain and beautify the grounds and the physical structure of the National Bahá'í Centre
- To ensure that a high standard of cleanliness is maintained in the complex
- To monitor and control access of all personnel and visitors in accordance with the established procedures, and ensure that the Centre is properly secured from trespassers and the like, while maintaining a courteous attitude towards visitors.
- To liaise with local police with respect to ongoing as well as pro-active issues related to the security of the premises
- To manage the operations of the Reception, Library, Guest House, kitchens, and pantries in the National Bahá'í Centre
- To manage the office supplies for the staff in the National Bahá'í Centre;
- To manage information technology support
- To arrange physical logistics for event management (e.g. for National Convention)
- To make procurements for the National Centre store
- To ensure efficient utilization of office space

7.3 Equipment requirements

It is reasonable to invest in a number of equipment upgrades for use in the gardens and housekeeping sections in order to improve efficiency levels of the staff.

7.4 Human resources needed

It is envisioned that the Office of Facilities will require around 16 staff members, of which 4 individuals would be considered long-term, as shown below:

Position	Long-term	Short-Term	Total
Coordinator	1		1
Maintenance supervisor	1		1
Housekeeping	1	3	4
Gardens	1	2	3
Computer assistant		1	1
Caretaker		1	1
Reception area		1	1
Security		4	4
Total	4	12	16

Clearly, the coordinator plays an important role in the overall functioning of this Office. He or she will need to constantly update his or her knowledge about security, cleaning, and maintenance issues, in order to assist and guide the other staff effectively in their work. Moreover, he or she will need to establish close ties and collaboration with the local police to enhance the security at the Centre.